

Diamond Shines Bright For Buckeye Insurance



What small company hasn't found itself in Buckeye Insurance Group's shoes? You get so caught up in the day-to-day operation of your business that you reach the point where your job is less about doing business and more about how you do business. For Chris Haines and the IT department at Buckeye, that meant spending their time keeping a legacy mainframe system—and a homegrown one at that—operating, instead of helping the company and its independent agents sell insurance policies.

Buckeye had spent 20 years enhancing the system, and its problems and limitations were becoming obvious. Haines, the P&C insurer's manager of technical operations, said staffing (and turnover) was becoming a major issue. "We could not just take RPG programmers off the street, bring them in, and have them start maintaining this system," he said. "They needed to understand its inner workings. That only comes from experience and having your hands on the system."

From a creative standpoint, this was also hurting the IT department. Instead of luring new and talented workers with the promise of developing exciting ways to do business with its agency force (websites, agency interfaces, etc.), Haines and the staff were spending time and money on maintaining an old system. End-user training was another problem: The old system used green screens, which meant the staff had to be trained to look closely for things such as coverage limits. Using temporary help was virtually impossible, because it took up to three months to train new personnel on the system.

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Buckeye initially considered building a new system of its own, but personnel changes made that more of a stretch, according to Haines. There were starts and stops along the way, but by 1999 the company was ready for an outside solution and decided on the Diamond System. In September of 2000, Buckeye went live with Diamond 4.0. Within six months, data conversion for the personal-auto line was complete, and 10,000 policies were in the system. Haines said he was hoping to get roughly 75 percent of policy information from the data conversion, but instead got between 90 and 95 percent.

Converting to any system has its rocky moments. "You have times when you're holding a few policies waiting on a fix, but those are the exception, not the norm," Haines said. "The benefits greatly outweigh the stutter steps we had to take to get where we are."

Haines believes the system's ability to do out-of-sequence endorsements and to view previous policy images are some of its biggest benefits. "With our previous system, every policy had one image. When changes were made, notes had to be taken to describe how the policy was changed, but you could never go back and look at the previous image," Haines said.

The conversion to a new system was also a good reason for Buckeye to examine itself, the products it offered, and the way its business operated. "The product review allowed us to somewhat tailor the products to the system," Haines said. "Why make a system so Buckeye-specific that enhancements and base releases are more difficult and time consuming to implement?"

That's a long way from the Buckeye of old where enhancements were but a dream and changes were something other people did. Today's Buckeye is ready for just about anything you can throw its way.

For information

on The Diamond System, visit www.insuresoft.com,
or contact us at sales@insuresoft.com • 866.299.1314